

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L DUBLIN 1875

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINR, EI

SUBJECT: BIO ON VISITING EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT MEMBER BRIAN LENIHAN

REF: STATE 222763

1. BIO DATA ON SENATOR BRIAN J. LENIHAN FOLLOWS: BORN DUNDALK COUNTY LOUTH, IRELAND, NOVEMBER 1930. MARRIED WITH FIVE CHILDREN. HE HAS AN ECONOMICS DEGREE FROM UNIVERSITY COLLEGE DUBLIN AND A LAW DEGREE FROM KING'S INNS, DUBLIN. HE WAS A SUCCESSFUL BARRISTER, BUSINESSMAN AND LOCAL POLITICIAN BEFORE BEING APPOINTED A SENATOR BY THE FIANNA FAIL PARTY IN 1957, AND ELECTED TO A SEAT IN THE LOWER HOUSE IN 1961. HE HELD THIS SEAT UNTIL 1973, WHEN HE WAS NARROWLY DEFEATED, THEN REENTERED THE SENATE AS LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION AND CHIEF WHIP IN THE SENATE.

2. LENIHAN BECAME A PROMINENT MEMBER OF THE FIANNA FAIL GOVERNMENT SHORTLY AFTER ENTERING THE DAIL, FIRST AS PARLIMENTARY SECTARY TO VARIOUS MINISTRIES (1961-64). IN 1964 HE BECAME MINISTER FOR JUSTICE, IN 1968 MINISTER FOR EDUCATION, 1969 MINISTER OF TRANSPORT AND POWER, AND BRIEFLY FOREIGN MINISTER JANUARY-FEBRUARY 1973 (THE GOVERNMENT FELL IN FEB. 1973). HE GAINED HIGH MARKS AS MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT AND POWER, AND WAS A CLOSE CONFIDANTE OF PARTY LEADER LYNCH. IT WOULD NOT BE AN EXAGGERATION TO CHARACTERIZE HIM AS ONE OF THE THREE OR FOUR MOST POWERFUL INDIVIDUALS IN THE LYNCH CABINET. HE CHOSE TO SWITCH CONSTITUENCIES IN 1973 AND LOST NARROWLY, ATTRIBUTED MORE TO AN ANOMALY IN IRELAND'S COMPLICATED PROPORTIONAL VOTING THAN UNPOPULARITY. LENIHAN HAS BEEN ONE OF THE MORE ACTIVE IRISH PAN-EUROPEANS. HE HAS BEEN A

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MEMBER OF THE CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

(1958-61), AND A MEMBER OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT (AND LEADER OF THE FIANNA FAIL DELEGATION) SINCE IRELAND'S ACCESSION IN 1973. END UNCLASSIFIED

4. BEGIN CONFIDENTIAL: LENIHAN'S ROLY-POLY STAGE IRISH APPEARANCE AND TALKATIVE EXTROVERT MANNER CONCEAL A VERY TOUGH POLITICIAN AND QUITE A REFLECTIVE INDIVIDUAL. WE HAVE BEEN IMPRESSED WITH SOME OF HIS SPEECHES ON THE FUTURE OF THE EC, FOR INSTANCE. ALTHOUGH TEMPORARILY IN ECLIPSE BECAUSE OF LOSING HIS DAIL SEAT, LENIHAN WILL REMAIN ONE OF THE KEY OPPOSITION LEADERS - HE IS ONE OF THE FEW IN FIANNA FAIL FULLY CAPABLE OF DEBATING WITH SUCH FORMIDABLE GOVERNMENT PERSONALITIES AS GARRET FITZGERALD AND CONOR CRUISE O'BRIEN. CURLEY

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